



C. Earl Hunter, Commissioner

Promoting and protecting the health of the public and the environment.

March 14, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Hospital; Nursing Home; Intermediate Care Facility for the Mentally Retarded; and, Community Residential Care Facility Administrators

FROM: Pamela M. Dukes, Deputy Commissioner *Pamela M Dukes*
Health Regulation

SUBJECT: Licensed Bed Capacity During An Emergency

NOTE: This memorandum replaces the Licensed Bed Capacity During an Emergency memorandum from Health Licensing dated December 8, 2003.

Standards regarding maximum bed capacity are established in the licensing regulations for hospitals, nursing homes, intermediate care facilities for the mentally retarded and community residential care facilities. An example of one such standard is found at § 501., Standards for Licensing Hospitals & Institutional General Infirmaries: 24A S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 61-16 (Supp. 2006), "No facility shall have set up or in use at any time more beds than the number stated on the face of the license except in cases of justified emergencies..." Furthermore, § 502. of Regulation 61-16, addresses the location of beds, "Beds shall not be placed in corridors, solaria or other locations not designated as patient room areas except in cases of justifiable emergencies." Due to recurring inquiries the Department is providing guidance on emergency situations and when additional beds (over and above licensed bed capacity) may be set up and utilized.

A facility desiring to temporarily admit patients/residents in excess of licensed bed capacity due to an emergency should do the following:

1. Request that the Department concur that an emergency situation does exist by contacting the:
 - a. Director of the Division of Health Licensing at (803) 545-4370, or;
 - b. Director of the Bureau of Health Facilities Regulation at (803) 545-4370, or;
 - c. Assistant Deputy Commissioner for Health Regulation at (803) 545-4200.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

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2. The facility should be prepared to:
 - a. outline the maximum number of patients/residents to be temporarily admitted, and;
 - b. an anticipated date for discharge of the temporary patients/residents, and;
 - c. how and where the temporary patients/residents will be housed.
3. Patients/residents temporarily admitted during a declared disaster will not be required to undergo tuberculin screening or submit to an admission history and physical examination.
4. The facility shall notify the Department when the temporary patients/residents have been discharged.

Other issues such as who will staff the care of the temporary patients/residents, physician orders, additional food for the temporary patients/residents, and handling of medications should be resolved ahead of time by memorandums of agreement, internal policies and procedures, etc.

If we may be of further assistance on this subject, please contact the Division of Health Licensing at (803) 545-4370.

cc: James R. Walker, Jr., SCHA
J. Randall Lee, SCHCA
Vicki Moody, SCANPHA
Karen Price, DHEC
Beverly Patterson, DHEC
Nancy Layman, DHEC
DHEC DA's
DHEC DMD's

Melody Rawls, SCARCH
P. Scott Jones, SCNHA
David Goodell, SCDDSN
Kevin Ridenour, DHEC
Shirley Hollingsworth, DHEC
Leon Frishman, DHEC
Mary Fechtel, DHEC